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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AGRICULTURAL ADJUSTMENT ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, D.C.

METHODS OF CONTROLLING PRODUCTION THROUGH SOUND DAIRY PRACTICE

(Statement to be presented at 15 regional meetings held between Apr. 1 and Apr. 15, 1934, to place before dairy farmers a proposed program for adjustment of the dairy industry)

If the dairy industry should adopt the proposed program for reducing individual farm sales of milk and butterfat below the average for 1932 and 1933, the question arises as to how the individual dairy farmer can best reduce his production or limit his sales of milk and butterfat to meet the requirements of his contract, and do it in such a way as to place his dairy operations on a permanently sounder and more economical basis.

The problem should first be considered in the light of the agricultural situation as a whole. This country has lost much of its foreign market for agricultural products, and a declining rate of increase in the home population indicates that growth of the domestic market cannot be depended on to take up the slack. Everything points to the probability that the total market, domestic and foreign, will not absorb the production of our agricultural plant, if present methods of production continue. It is not good business for farmers to produce to the limit of the land's capacity, when the market does not want all the product.

We can adjust total production by means we are now using—by taking out of cultivation small acreages on several million farms. Over a period of years, Government agencies can help, too, by returning to forest, recreation, and wild life uses much land that ought not to be farmed.

Everyone recognizes that it is necessary to buttress the emergency programs with permanent readjustments which will maintain a desirable balance of supply and demand, once it is achieved. This permanent readjustment can be accomplished by shifting to less intensive methods of using the land.

Wider use of pastures and meadows in our farming system will reduce the production of cash crops, slow up production of animal products per animal unit, conserve the fertility of the soil, and, for agriculture as a whole, will produce increased net returns.

Shortly before and during the war our farmers plowed up 45 million acres of land—most of which was formerly in grass—chiefly to meet an extraordinary demand. Since the war a reduction in work stock has released around 35 million acres from production of

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feed. Simultaneously there has been a shift of more than 30 million acres in cultivation—going out mostly east of the Mississippi and coming in on the Great Plains. We have not put much acreage back into grass, though the urge for intensive cultivation no longer exists. It is high time to return some cultivated acreage to grass and forage.

It is often supposed that more pasture and forage would mean increased production of meat and milk. It would mean less, because pasture and forage land, taken as an average, produces less feed per acre than cultivated land. What it does produce is much cheaper, but the volume is down. American pastures are lower in productivity than they need be, and better care would increase output greatly. Yet even at best, a greater utilization of grass and forage means reduced output per animal unit, though not reduced profits, per acre.

Farmers are already moving in that direction. The trend is well marked in Michigan, northern Indiana, and in an area extending across southern Indiana, southern Illinois and central Missouri to eastern Kansas and southward into Kentucky and Tennessee. In many other regions the same policy, in varying degrees, would be effective.

GROW AND FEED LESS GRAIN AND MORE ROUGHAGE TO CUT MILK PRODUCTION AND FEED COST

Now, specifically for dairymen: Dairy farmers in many sections of the country would find it advantageous to reduce the total milk production on their farms by changing their system of farming and feeding to one in which they would keep most of their land in permanent pasture grasses and legumes, and grow very little if any grain. The pasturage and roughage crops would be the basal ration, and grain would be fed only when the resultant increase in production would warrant. This change in feeding practice would be permanently advantageous.

Feeding trials by the Bureau of Dairy Industry indicate that when cows are fed a *good quality of roughage*, and the grain ration is cut to 1 pound for each 6 pounds of milk produced, the milk yield is about 10 percent less than when the grain ration is twice as much. When a *good quality of roughage* is fed as the sole ration the milk yield is about 30 percent less than when the full-grain ration is fed with the roughage.

This drop in milk production, either when the grain ration is cut in two or eliminated entirely, does not involve a corresponding drop in profits. Usually the cost of producing the necessary feed nutrients in the form of roughage instead of in the form of grain is so much lower—less than half as much in many cases—that it pays to grow the dairy ration in the form of roughage instead of in the form of grain. The drop of 10 or 30 percent in milk yield is more than offset by the reduced feed cost.

A *good quality of roughage* is essential, and better results are obtained from the cows accustomed to eating large quantities of roughage.

Dairy farmers who have a *good quality of roughage* already available, or who are in position to grow it this summer, can feed more

roughage and less grain as an economical method of curtailing production immediately to meet the requirements of a contract under the Agricultural Adjustment Administration production-control program. But, because growing and feeding more home-grown roughages enables the farmer to produce milk at the lowest cost, the practice is desirable from the long-time point of view, whether total milk production is to be curtailed or not.

OTHER METHODS OF REDUCTION

Under the proposed adjustment program for the dairy industry, the method or methods of reducing production or limiting sales would be optional with the farmer. The State Extension Services can perform helpful service by making carefully thought out suggestions, based on sound dairy-management practices. While a change in feeding practices promises the most permanently good results, exact recommendations for reduction will differ in different sections and according to local conditions.

Some farmers will find that they can cut their sales by using more milk on the farm. Others should get rid of the diseased cows in their herds. Low-producing cows can be culled, because the "boarder" cow is a liability under nearly all conditions. The suggestions offered here are all practical possibilities, and will doubtless be considered by farmers in different localities.

CULL UNSOUND AND LOW-PRODUCING COWS

Normally some 4½ million dairy cows are culled annually, but normal culling has not taken place during this period. Some dairymen have held on to their culls, hoping that the Federal Government would buy them up at higher figures than the packers will pay. For reasons elsewhere explained, the dairy proposal does not contemplate such a measure.

There are few herds in the country that do not have one or more unsound or unprofitable cows that should be slaughtered. The culling of these cows is logical, not only as a means of reducing milk production of the herd, but also as a means of improving practices and making production more efficient.

Culling low-producing cows from the herd is good practice at all times. It is especially good practice now with such low prices for dairy products. A word of caution is essential, however, so as not to encourage unduly the sending of excessive numbers of cull cows to the packers. The packers probably cannot absorb all these cows at once without greatly depressing the market, so it seems that the feasible thing is for the farmer to dry off the cull cows and turn them on good pasture to fatten so they may be sent to market in orderly numbers later, and in a condition in which they will make a better quality of meat.

Furthermore, almost any farm family could use at least one cow for meat right on the farm, and thus keep her off the glutted meat market. The market should be able to absorb the normal supply of 4,500,000 culls during the year; if each dairy farm family were also to consume one carcass, this would account for an additional 4,000,000

head. If this number of the lower-producing cows were taken out of production it would mean a reduction of approximately 25 percent of the present number of milk cows; and should result in reducing the total milk production by from 12 to 15 percent, according to computations based on dairy herd-improvement association records.

REMOVE DISEASED ANIMALS

A fund of $5,000,000 would be provided, under the program to hasten tuberculosis testing and the removal of tuberculous cattle. It is estimated that some 600,000 head of these cattle would be made into tankage as a result of this campaign.

Plans are also being drawn that may make possible the eradication of Bang's disease and infectious mammitis. Whether or not indemnity is paid for diseased cattle removed, certainly no dairyman can afford under present conditions to tolerate these pernicious diseases in his herd. If the herd is infected, the owner should be sure to keep eradication of diseased animals in mind when laying plans for production control.

RAISE FEWER CALVES

It has been pointed out that one of the reasons for the present dairy situation is the abnormally large number of cows being milked. This was predicted several years ago on the basis of returns showing larger numbers of heifers raised for replacements.

The opposite procedure can well be the order of the day now. The principles to follow should be:

(1) Kill all grade bull calves and bull calves from low-producing registered cows, or raise them for veal only.

(2) Kill all heifer calves out of low-producing cows, whether grades or purebreds, as well as those that are weak and undersized, or raise them for veal only.

(3) Raise only a sufficient number of heifer calves, from the best producing cows and sired by good registered bulls, to maintain but not to increase the size of the dairy herd.

Heifer calves intended for replacements should be fed so that their maximum dairy development will be assured. As one of the alternative methods in accomplishing control of production the liberal use of whole milk for feeding replacement heifer calves, as well as for the veal calves, will result in withholding considerable quantities from the market and at the same time contribute to the development of the heifer calves. Replacement heifer calves and veal calves can well be fed whole milk from 8 to 12 weeks as a part of the control plan. Each such calf will account for 600 to 1,600 pounds of whole milk during this period, in addition to the curtailed amounts of grain and legume hay necessary. Incidentally hogs and chickens can be fed whole milk to good advantage as a means of limiting sales from the farm.

Good dairy management means keeping labor costs low. Labor is an important item in raising dairy calves, and it may be found expedient during this emergency to use lower-producing cows, low-testing cows, or cows well along in lactation as nurse cows for these replacement or veal calves. This applies particularly to beef cows.

BREED HEIFERS LATER

Studies by the Bureau of Dairy Industry from records of dairy cows in dairy herd-improvement associations show that within the breed the larger cows excel in milk and in butterfat production. Other studies show that the greater the production per cow the greater the income over cost of feed. Combining the results of these two studies with the need for curtailment of production leaves the age-old slogan " fewer but better cows."

The real start in obtaining these good, high-producing cows is in the breeding, but when he starts with the heifer calf the dairyman's problem is to obtain size and condition at the time of freshening. Holding off breeding until the heifer is at least 18 months of age will afford opportunity to feed for maximum development. At the same time with the need for curtailment of production from the herd as a whole, this delay in breeding will keep several months' production of each such heifer off the market. There is also somewhat of a labor-saving feature to this method in that it is easier to care for a heifer not in milk than for one that is in production.

REDUCE NUMBER OF DAILY MILKINGS

Another way to curtail production, which will have only a limited application, is to reduce the number of milkings in herds now milked three or four times a day to only two times a day. There will also be a corresponding curtailment in the labor requirements necessary for milking, and also in the feed requirements.

USE MORE DAIRY PRODUCTS ON THE FARM

There is a decided need for a greater consumption of fluid milk on farms as well as in cities, in the diets for adults as well as children. The Bureau of Home Economics says the value of milk in the diet of the adult seems almost eclipsed in the public mind by the emphasis placed on the importance of milk in infancy and childhood. And yet nutritionists constantly call attention to the whole family's need for milk and its products because of their nutritive value. Milk contributes more to good nutrition than does any other single food. Milk is an outstanding source of calcium—so essential to strong bones and teeth.

There are 4,500,000 farms on which cows are being milked. Assuming an average of 5 persons per farm, or 22,500,000 persons in all, if each person on these farms consumed an additional glass of milk per day it would require a total of 500,000,000 gallons of milk to supply this additional consumption. In other words, using this amount of milk on farms where it is produced would be an admirable way for the farm family to keep it off the market.

No remarks about consumption of dairy products are complete without emphasizing the importance of quality. People eat greater quantities of dairy products that are palatable and of good quality. This applies to farm families as well as to city people. The farmer who goes to extra effort to produce milk under the most sanitary conditions, to cool it promptly, and to keep it cool, will find that he

has a more valuable food product, either for home consumption or for the market.

But quality is not limited to flavor and palatability. The Bureau of Dairy Industry has found that milk produced on good grass and hay is far superior in vitamin A content to milk produced on dry feed. Without vitamin A, young animals cannot grow and are subject to various fatal infections. Vitamin A is just as necessary for people. In connection with the Department's program for turning cultivated lands into pastures and forage crops there is the opportunity for dairy farmers not only to produce milk more economically but to produce milk with a greater vitamin A content.

CONCLUSION

Some of these methods of curtailing sales or production can be put into effect sooner than others. So far as the increase in pasture and forage acreage is concerned, the Department has for many weeks been recommending immediate action. The seed supply is such that the country as a whole could get about 6 million acres above normal plantings into pasture and forage this spring. This obviously falls far short of what must eventually be accomplished. Farmers should save as much seed as possible this season for establishing pastures next spring. In the crop-reduction contract already in farmers' hands, the Federal Government has provided a substantial incentive for the shift to a grass economy. This dairy program offers still another incentive. It provides a way of meeting an emergency which the farmer can turn to his permanent benefit.

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